

AUNATUREL



GOOD WOMEN IN BAD PLACES

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

SAM DAVID

I call my work "Au Naturel." It does NOT mean only "nude" or "naked." It means in nature, in the simplest manner, without makeup or plumage. My work seeks to capture the emotional and physical implications of being nude in settings that are challenging and not without risk. I care as much about what a woman's face tells us about the experience as I do about her form and I hope that it shows in these images.

Whether the images were created outdoors in my favorite places or in my studios in Connecticut and Maine – my earliest partners in making beautiful images taught me to "let it come naturally." I do not "pose" the women with whom I am privileged to work, or ask that they do their hair or apply more than minimal makeup. I show them the place and the direction of the light, put some Vivaldi on the player and ask my partners to be who they want to be in the moment we are at. In the instants before and after they come to that point, that is when their true feelings are exposed and their beauty and emotions the most natural.

Prints of most of my work are available through my website – www.samdavidphotography.com or you may contact me for custom printing or to schedule a photographic session at sam.david.photo@gmail.com.

Enjoy my work. Let it come naturally.

SAM DAVID

As I move into “the rest of my life” I am fulfilling my promise to my family and myself to do the things I always said I would do when I had the time. For many years, I worked with major corporations, helping them craft their messages. I needed to do something that expressed my own message – something creative, challenging, risky and representing my own aesthetic.


I always loved photography, particularly photographing beautiful women in natural light. That is what I first learned to do in Chicago with Norris McNamara, whose fame as a photographer was hard won covering the Civil Rights movement in the South in the 1960's. Norris had the amazing ability to put himself in danger as his subjects faced danger, and brought that sense of risk to the portfolios he shot for beautiful young models as he recovered from his travels in his studio in Chicago on Friday afternoons. I was lucky enough to be his client, and his friend.

Norris taught me what he called his three basic rules of photography – if you don't have your camera you can't take the picture; film (now digital memory) is cheap; and it's all about seeing the light. If you accepted and obeyed all three, chances were you were going to make a good picture.

It took me twenty five years after leaving Norris's studio before I had the time to apply his three rules to the pictures I wanted to make. One key thing I had observed was that a model's headshot was always better – at least to my aesthetic – if she was made to undress before the images were made. Without plumage, in an unfamiliar environment, the real woman – not the posed one, not the one with the look she thought was “right” – was exposed, and it was almost always beautiful. And I also observed that the real benefit of bracketing was not the “perfect” exposure, it was that the best image was taken $\frac{1}{4}$ of a second before or $\frac{1}{4}$ of a second after the model posed, again because the camera would catch her at her most natural.

The next step was to take it outdoors. I had always been fascinated by nudes, particularly nudes in nature. Stripped of plumage, challenged by the environment and illuminated only with natural light there is less posing and far more the model becoming herself and a partner in the creative process, particularly as the session moves on. Each image stops life as it is in the instant it is taken, but, if the image is successful, that unposed instant carries with it not just the now, but the past and the future that is the full beauty of the woman. Why? Because we let it come naturally.

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did not pick the locations in which the images in this issue of Au Naturel were created. My partners, the models, did. Whether it is the mudflats of the Hudson River, a wrecked factory in Maine or a wrecked college in upstate New York, and whether it is an abandoned refreshment stand on a private lake or a muddy stream hidden in the Connecticut woods, these venues and the ways they were used were the model's choices. My cameras and I were lucky enough to be there.

There are many reasons -- as many as there are models -- for why I think these "bad places" were chosen by the models. The decision to pose nude and to share those images with the world is a bold one, and little communicates that more strongly than posing in a particularly challenging environment. Another thought: each model is, of course, beautiful, and the contrast with battered, damaged, dangerous, dirty environments strengthens that perception as well. Unless, of course, you choose to cover yourself in mud or bury yourself in leaves. That I don't pretend to understand, although being there to make the photographs, seeing the happiness of my creative partners as they go through a session literally of their own making, and then sharing the images with you is an absolute pleasure.

Photographing good women in bad places also says something about me, and the way I think about my work. Because I want my partners/models to be natural, I am very happy to have them select and work in venues that help them feel that way, even when they want to be challenged by what most people would consider the uncomfortable. Whether indoors in a comfortable room or studio or outdoors in a particularly nasty venue, if the model has chosen it and strikes her own pose the camera captures her as precisely who she is at moment the shutter clicks. It is truly Au Naturel.

—Sam David



IVY IN THE HUDSON RIVER MUDFLATS #1



IVY IN THE HUDSON RIVER MUDFLATS #2



IVY IN THE HUDSON RIVER MUDFLATS #3



IVY AND HALEY -- MUD WRESTLING #1



IVY AND HALEY -- MUD WRESTLING #2



IVY AND HALEY -- MUD WRESTLING #3



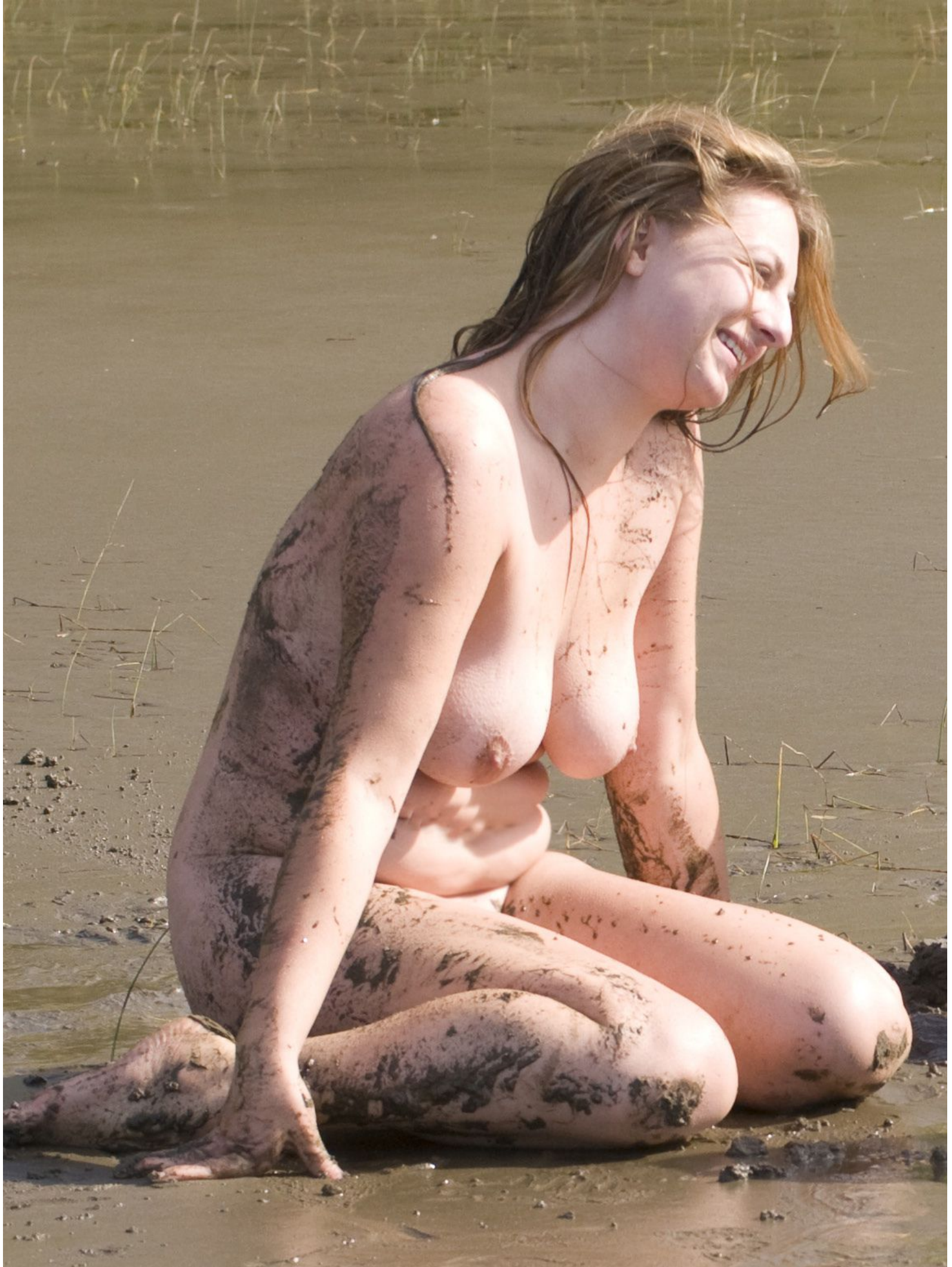
GRETCHEN IN THE WRECKED COLLEGE #1



GRETCHEN IN THE WRECKED COLLEGE #2



GRETCHEN IN THE WRECKED COLLEGE #3



KAYLA IN THE HUDSON RIVER MUDFLATS #1



KAYLA IN THE HUDSON RIVER MUDFLATS #2



KAYLA IN THE HUDSON RIVER MUDFLATS #3



KAYLA IN THE HUDSON RIVER MUDFLATS #4 -- END OF THE DAY



LOLA AT THE KENNEBEC RIVER STONEYARD #1



LOLA AT THE KENNEBEC RIVER STONEYARD #2



LOLA AT THE KENNEBEC RIVER STONEYARD #3



LOLA AT THE KENNEBEC RIVER STONEYARD #4



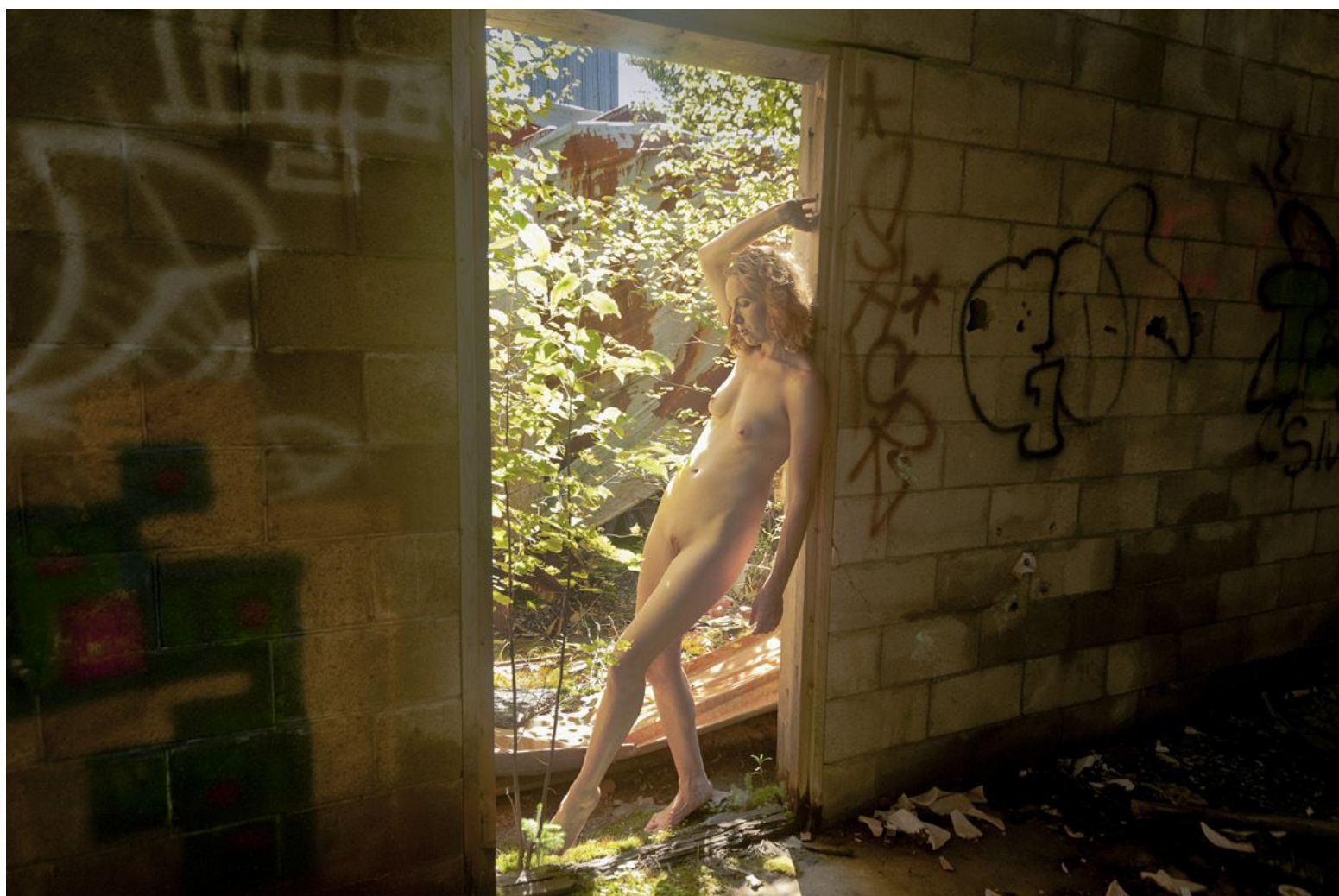
MICHELLE IN THE ABANDONED BOAT FACTORY IN MAINE #1



MICHELLE IN THE ABANDONED BOAT FACTORY IN MAINE #2



MICHELLE IN THE ABANDONED BOAT FACTORY IN MAINE #3



MICHELLE IN THE ABANDONED BOAT FACTORY IN MAINE #4



MICHELLE IN THE ABANDONED BOAT FACTORY IN MAINE #5 -- STRUCK BY THE LIGHTBEAM



RUBY IN THE WRECKED FACTORY #1



RUBY IN THE WRECKED FACTORY #2



RUBY IN THE WRECKED FACTORY #3



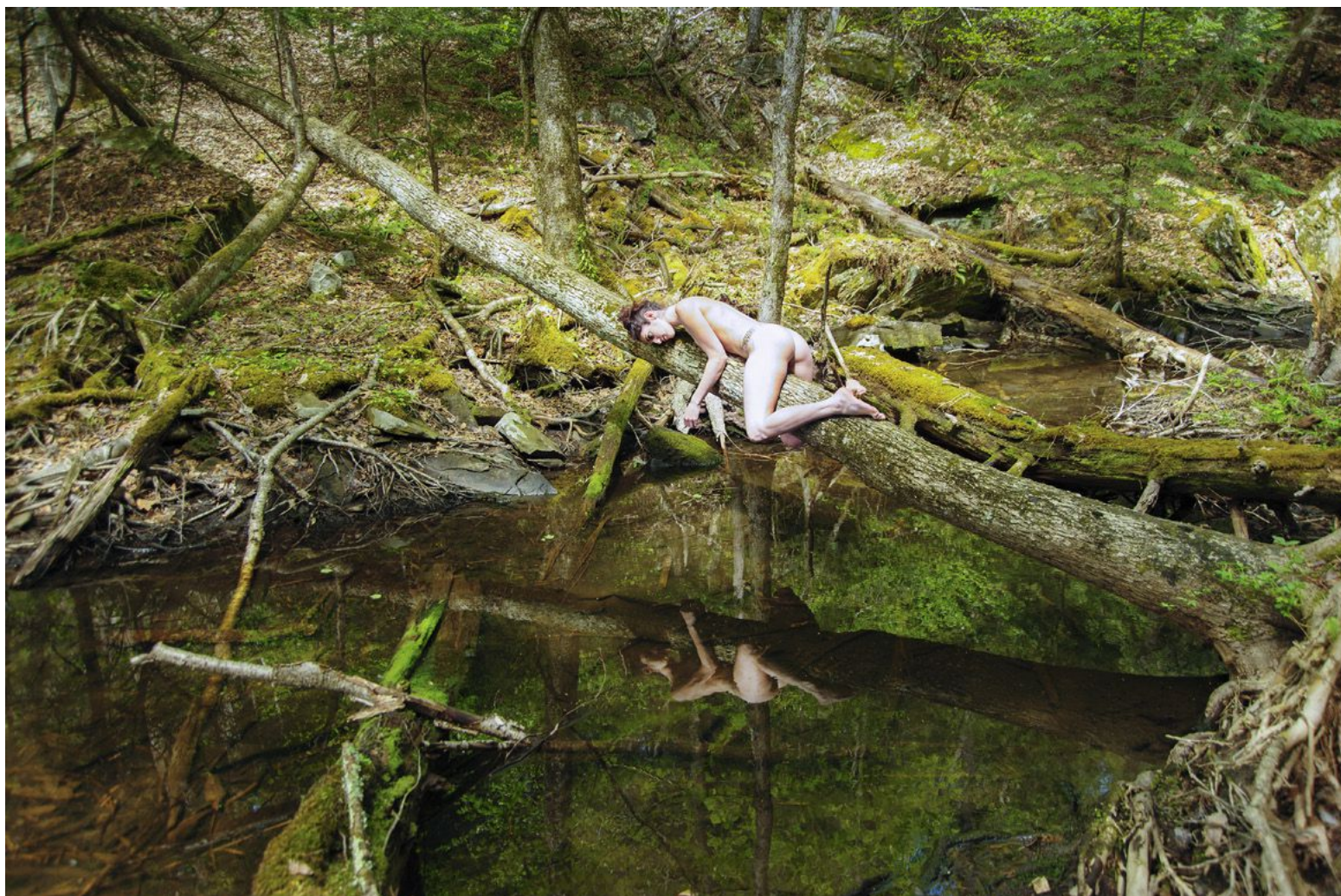
RUBY IN THE WRECKED FACTORY #4



ELENA IN THE WRECKED POOL HOUSE



HALEY IN THE ABANDONED CRYPT



JACS CONTEMPLATES DANGLING OVER THE SWAMP



KATIE -- A SLOW DAY AT THE OLD REFRESHMENT STAND



MELISSA IN THE MAINE QUARRY



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 01



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 02



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 03



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 04



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 05



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 06



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 07



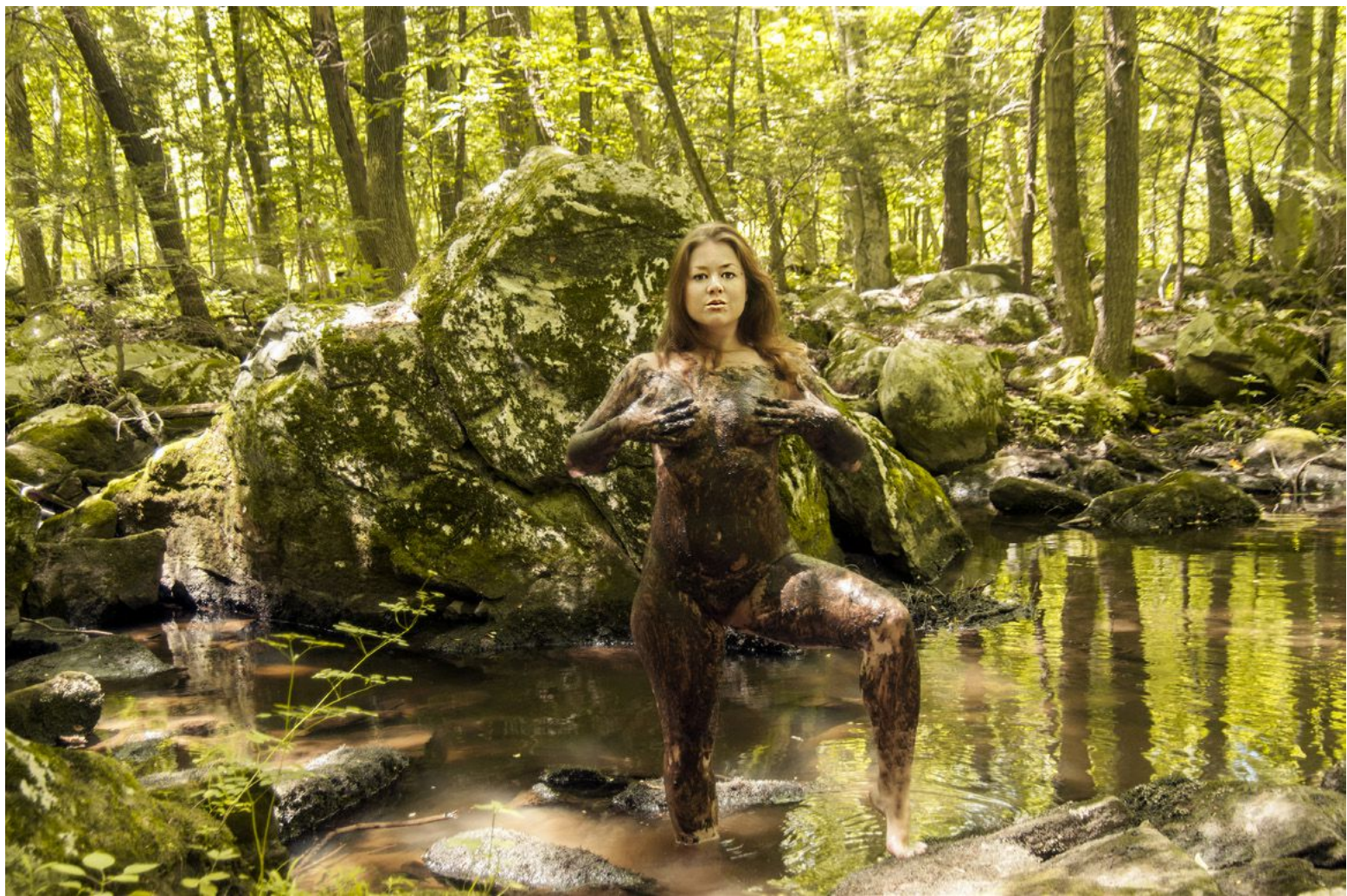
REBECCA'S MUD BATH 08



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 09



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 10



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 11



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 12



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 13



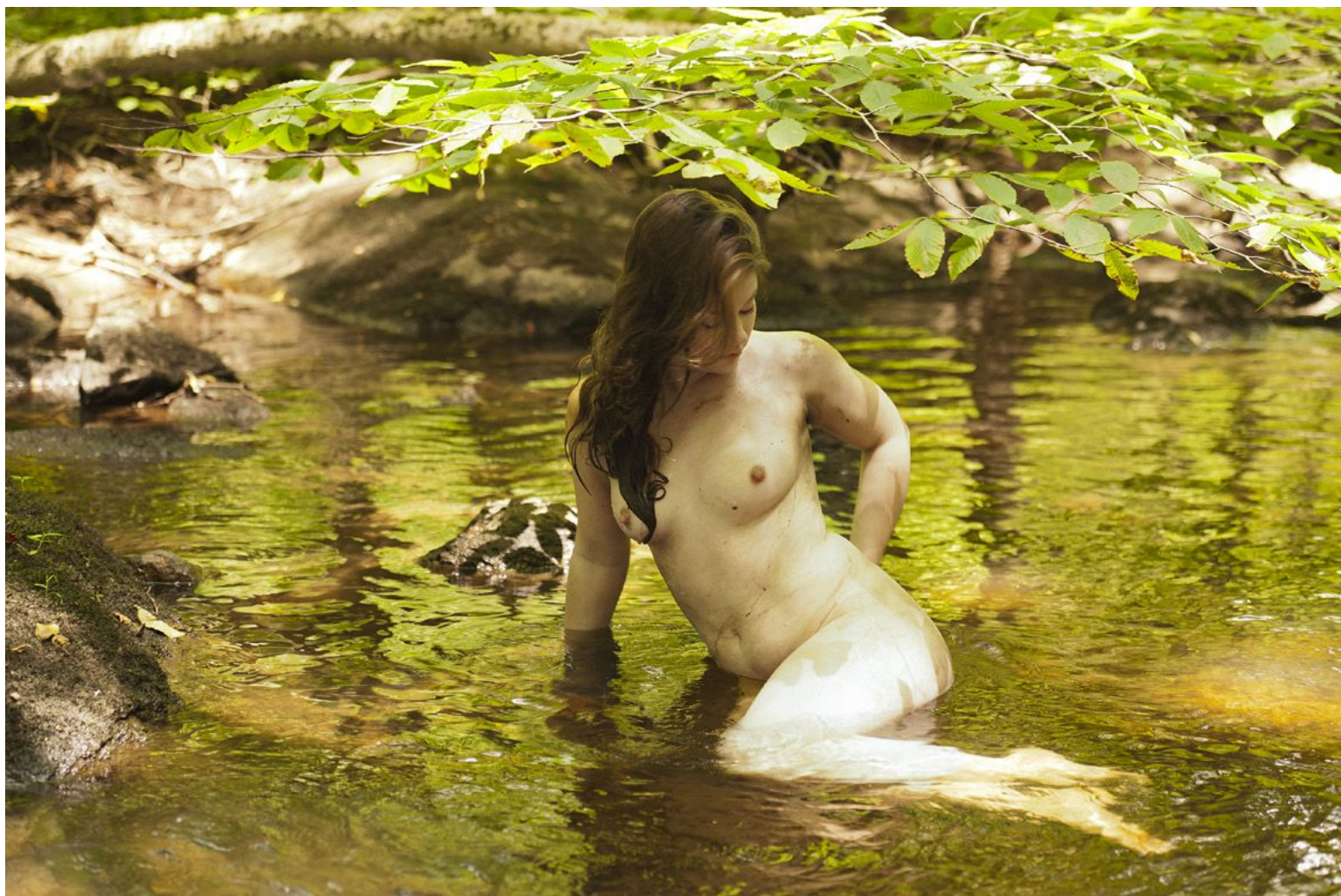
REBECCA'S MUD BATH 14



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 15



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 16



REBECCA'S MUD BATH 17



IVY AND HALEY -- DIRTY DANCING



IVY AND HALEY -- MUD WRESTLING #4 -- LEAVING AS BEST FRIENDS PAST THE SPECTATORS